

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 IGA-01 AGR-05 SP-02 EB-07 NSC-05

CIEP-01 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 COME-00

DHA-02 ORM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 /085 W

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R 220855Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8169

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 4674

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, ECON, PINS, PINT, PGOV, BG

SUBJECT: CALL ON VICE PRESIDENT MOHAMMADULLAH

1. SUMMARY: DURING MY COURTESY CALL ON VICE PRESIDENT (AND FORMER PRESIDENT) MOHAMMADULLAH SATURDAY MORNING, HE SAID THAT NEW GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO RETURN TO MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM BUT COULD NOT SAY NOW WHEN THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE; THAT DENATIONALIZATION WAS NOT IN THE OFFING AND THAT RUMORS TO THIS EFFECT PROBABLY CAME FROM ENTREPRENEURS WHO HAD HOPED FOR SUCH ACTION; THAT, DESPITE IMPRESSIONS TO THE CONTRARY, NEW GOVERNMENT WAS AS SERIOUS ABOUT POPULATION CONTROL AS OLD GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN; THANKED US FOR PAST ASSISTANCE AND HOPED FOR MORE THIS YEAR. END SUMMARY.

2. VICE PRESIDENT OPENED BY ASKING FOR MY VIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION IN BANGLADESH. I TOLD HIM THERE WAS AN ATMOSPHERE OF "SO FAR, SO GOOD" BUT THAT THERE WAS ALSO CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN WHAT POSITIVE PROGRAMS LAY AHEAD. NEW GOVERNMENT APPEARED TO BE CONCENTRATING IN ITS FIRST DAYS ON ATTACKING CORRUPTION, I SAID, AND THIS WAS WELCOMED, ESPECIALLY BY THOSE WITH IMPORTANT AID PROGRAMS WHO WOULD BE CONCERNED

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ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THEIR AID. WE WISHED THE GOVERNMENT

SUCCESS IN THIS AND OTHER PROGRAMS AND WERE NATURALLY INTERESTED IN WHAT THESE PROGRAMS WOULD BE. IN FAMILY PLANNING AREA, FOR EXAMPLE, OUR PEOPLE HAD FOUND A HESITANT ATMOSPHERE SINCE AUGUST 15 AND WE WONDERED WHETHER NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD PURSUE THIS PROBLEM WITH AS MUCH ATTENTION AS IT HAD BEEN GIVEN IN THE LAST MONTHS OF OLD GOVERNMENT.

3. MOHAMMADULLAH SAID THAT IN DOMESTIC MATTERS THE AIM OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WAS DEMOCRACY. THEY WOULD WISH EVENTUALLY TO RESTORE THE MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM AS THE BAKSAL ONE-PARTY STATE HAD NOT SUITED THE BANGALEE TEMPERAMENT. BANGLADESH WAS UNDERDEVELOPED ECONOMICALLY BUT THE PEOPLE HAD DEMOCRATIC IDEAS. HOWEVER, IT WAS NOT YET POSSIBLE TO FORESEE THE SCHEDULE FOR RESTORING THE MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM OR WHEN THE PARLIAMENT WOULD BE CALLED TO ACT AGAIN. WHEN THE PARTIES WERE RESTORED, HE THOUGHT THE AWAMI LEAGUE WOULD BE ONE OF THEM IN VIEW OF THE LONG TRADITION IT HAD. IN ITS FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD PURSUE THE SAME POLICY OF "FRIENDSHIP FOR ALL AND MALICE TOWARD NONE." SO FAR AS THE UNITED STATES WAS CONCERNED, BANGLADESH WAS GRATEFUL FOR OUR GENEROUS AID IN THE PAST AND HOPED IT WOULD BE INCREASED THIS YEAR. I SAID THAT WE WERE CONTINUING OUR AID ALONG ESTABLISHED LINES AND NOTED THAT WE HAD JUST SIGNED A PL-480 AGREEMENT CALLING FOR DELIVERY OF 400,000 TONS OF FOOD GRAINS WHICH WAS ABOUT AT LEVEL INDICATED IN JUNE MEETING WITH THEM IN PARIS.

4. VICE PRESIDENT SAID HE DID NOT THINK THERE WOULD BE BIG CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE; EMPHASIS WOULD BE ON MAKING THE PRESENT SYSTEM WORK BETTER AND IN MAXIMIZING PRODUCTION FROM THE JUTE MILLS. WHEN I NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN RUMORS A WEEK OR SO AGO THAT THE MILLS AND PROPERTIES FORMERLY OWNED BY BANGALEES WOULD BE RETURNED TO THEM BUT THAT THESE RUMORS HAD NOW DISAPPEARED, HE SAID THAT DENATIONALIZATION WAS NOT NOW IN THE OFFING, POINTING OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS EMPHASIZING THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTION, ONE OF WHICH WAS SOCIALISM. THESE RUMORS PROBABLY CAME, HE SAID, FROM THE ENTREPRENEURS WHO HOPED THIS WOULD HAPPEN. THEY WOULD, HOWEVER, TRY TO GIVE MORE SCOPE TO BUSINESS AND TRY TO GET THE BEST OUT OF THE SYSTEM WITHOUT

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THE OLD CORRUPTION AND FAVORITISM.

5. SO FAR AS FAMILY PLANNING WAS CONCERNED, HE SAID, THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD BE AS SERIOUS IN THIS FIELD AS THE OLD GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN AND ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO IT. BUT, HE SAID, THE NEW GOVERNMENT NEEDED A LITTLE BREATHING SPACE.

6. MOHAMMADULLAH SPENT MUCH OF OUR TIME REGRETFULLY RECALLING LAST BLACK WEEKS OF MUJIB'S RULE, DESCRIBING VIRTUAL "REIGN OF TERROR" WHICH HAD BEGUN IN APRIL. HE SAID IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT 700 PEOPLE HAD BEEN KILLED IN LAST THREE MONTHS BEFORE AUGUST 15 AS BAKSAL AGENTS CONDUCTED CAMPAIGN WHICH WAS OSTENSIBLY DIRECTED AGAINST EXTREMISTS BUT WHICH IN FACT WAS AIMED AT ALL POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND IN WHICH THE BAKSAL AGENTS ALSO SETTLED PERSONAL SCORES, "NOT ONLY THEIR OWN SCORES BUT THOSE OF THEIR FATHERS AND GRANDFATHERS AS WELL." (SEPARATE MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION FOLLOWS ON THIS SUBJECT.) MUJIB HAD NOT BEEN LIKE THAT IN THE BEGINNING, HE SAID, BUT HAD FALLEN UNDER INFLUENCE OF BAD ADVISERS.

7. COMMENT. MOHAMMADULLAH'S OBSERVATIONS ARE CONSISTENT WITH OTHER EVIDENCE WE HAVE ABOUT CHARACTER AND DIRECTION OF NEW GOVERNMENT AND TENOR OF HIS REMARKS CONFIRMS OUR GROWING IMPRESSION THAT IMPORTANT NEW POLICAL MEASURES MAY BE SLOW IN COMING, WHILE PRESENT LEADERS ATTACK CORRUPTION AND LAW AND ORDER PROBLEMS AND TRY TO BRING MORE EFFICIENCY TO THE PRESENT SYSTEM. THE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, IT IS ALSO BECOMING CLEAR, IS PROBABLY A FAIRLY LONG TIME AWAY.  
BOSTER

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